

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for a couple of minutes to comment on Senator BENNET's speech.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SENATOR BENNET'S MAIDEN SPEECH

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I congratulate the Senator from Colorado on what we call in the Senate his maiden address. I also had the privilege of hearing Senator UDALL's speech when he made his on renewable energy. I was glad to hear these today.

The Senator from Colorado has focused on a subject he has worked on hard and which is central to every part of our ability to improve our schools. It is one recognized by our new Education Secretary who, I think, is President Obama's best new appointee. It is the question of how do we reward outstanding teaching.

Every time we deal with education, we are ultimately reminded that it boils down to the parent and the teacher. What the parent cannot do, the teacher has to step in and finish. In so many cases, whether it is a gifted child or a child who hasn't been read to at home or a child with disabilities or a child who needs a music lesson, it takes a gifted teacher to do the best job to help the child reach his or her potential.

We are still, as the Senator said, 50 or 60 or 70 years behind in recognizing that our country has changed and that women have many opportunities outside the home. We cannot trap them into teaching. We need to attract them and keep them, as well as outstanding men.

Senator BENNET has been successful in his work in Denver and in finding ways to initiate that. The Secretary wants to do that. I worked on that in Tennessee. I have said to the Secretary of Education if he leaves after 4 or 8 years having left a legacy of many different ways of improving ways to reward outstanding teaching, he will have done more than all of the other secretaries of education put together.

As Albert Shanker once said, "If we can have master plumbers, we can have master teachers."

Again, I congratulate the Senator from Colorado for his focus on education in his maiden address. I was happy and privileged to be on the Senate floor to hear that.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Colorado is recognized.

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Tennessee, and I acknowledge his great work as Secretary of Education. This is one of those issues on which I think Republicans and Democrats have a lot of work they can do together. There isn't one solution. This is a time when we are long overdue, and we have been short on an-

swers. I think the Education Secretary is perfectly positioned to carry on the work that needs to be done. I look forward to working with the Senator, and I appreciate him enduring my speech.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BENNET). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. President, I also had the opportunity to be here presiding in the chair to hear the Senator from Colorado in his maiden speech. I want to congratulate him and tell him he has done an excellent job in the Senate, as I have observed him over the last 100 days.

I think Senator BENNET has hit on an issue that is important to all of us. If we are going to move forward as a nation, we are going to have to do it by focusing on education. It is heartening to see that we have a President, President Barack Obama, who cares about education with the same passion, I believe, the Senator from Colorado has.

One of the things the Senator from Colorado noted is that we have to focus on teachers. He talked about a comprehensive approach, an approach to education that is going to move us forward in the 21st century. Teachers have to be a big part of it. Parents have to be a big part of it. As the Senator from Colorado noted, based on his work in Denver and in chairing the Denver education effort, if parents aren't involved, we are not going to be able to move forward.

In addition, one of the big things Senator BENNET knows is, this No Child Left Behind law needs to be revamped. It is not doing right by our children. We have to take a look at that piece of legislation with the ideas that he mentioned and make sure we put into place a piece of legislation and a reauthorization that is going to empower our teachers and our parents and move us forward on the education front.

Again, I just wanted to congratulate Senator BENNET. It was a great start with that maiden speech. I thought the exchange the Senator had with Senator ALEXANDER was a good one. It shows that we can work together.

Senator BENNET from Colorado has shown a bipartisanship in his first 100 days. I very much want to congratulate him and tell him I have enjoyed serving with him and look forward to serving with him for a very long time.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that all time under morning business be yielded back and the Senate now begin consideration of the conference report on the budget.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is now closed.

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2010—CONFERENCE REPORT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will begin debate on the conference report to accompany S. Res. 13.

The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I also want to recognize the excellent first speech that the Senator from Colorado just gave. I had a chance to hear part of it on the Senate floor and part of it in the cloakroom. We welcome him. If his first speech is any measure, he is going to make a significant contribution. So we are delighted to have somebody of his thoughtfulness and quality as part of this body.

Mr. President, the Senate now begins consideration of the conference agreement on the budget for 2010. I think we have to see this budget in its context. We have to understand what this administration has inherited from the previous administration. To be clear, it is a colossal mess—the worst recession since the Great Depression, a doubling of debt under the previous administration, and a more than tripling of foreign holdings of U.S. debt.

I try to suppress partisanship in my discussions on the Senate floor, but it is impossible to overlook the record of the previous administration. They have slammed this economy into the ditch. President Obama is put in the position of the cleanup crew. It is not pretty or easy, and it is going to be a difficult challenge for this country to come out of a policy stew that is impossible to choke down.

Let me be clear in my own view of how we got here. I believe we had an overly loose monetary policy under the control of the Federal Reserve ever since 9/11, an overly loose fiscal policy under the control of the White House and the Congress, record deficits, a massive buildup of debt—when the economy was relatively strong and right before the baby boom generation started to retire. That is remarkable.

If you look back into history, it is rare to have at the same time an overly loose monetary policy, low interest rates, Congress and the White House